

## CHAPTER 4

# MEDIA RELATIONS

Media relations is an important facet of your public affairs office operation, yet it is often underemphasized or taken for granted. Depending on the events at your command, media relations can be your number one priority and easily consume most, if not all, of your public affairs workday. Whether it be a colorful change of command ceremony or a plane crash with several fatalities, you can count on interaction with the media. Therefore, you must understand the complex media machine—its parts, strategies and concerns. This understanding will help you recognize the elements that form the foundation of good media relations.

Also, you must know how to establish credibility for yourself, office and command, and recognize the strategies you can use to release information to the media. This chapter covers these areas and more.

### IMPORTANCE OF SOUND MILITARY/MEDIA RELATIONS

Learning Objective: *Recognize the importance of sound military/media relations.*

Americans deal with large amounts of information every day. The Navy and the American people are now being led by a television generation of workers and young leaders. To reach the public in this age of instant television, you must understand the strengths and weaknesses of the mass news media and know how to use them most effectively, particularly the television medium.

### TRENDS

Two trends in American society make the task of communicating the Navy's message more demanding. First, since the military draft ended in 1973, fewer and fewer Americans have had firsthand military experience. This group cannot adequately judge the fairness of military information in news reports. The public must rely on the reporter to balance his story, which may or may not apply, depending on the reporter and the editors or producers.

Second, a generation changing of the guard has come to the journalism industry. When the draft ended, the news reporters who usually showed up at military

events were most likely high school teenagers or college students. Reporters who are now in their late 20s or early 30s (as of this writing) were in journalism schools in the late 1970s when the military image was shaped by anti-Vietnam and post-Vietnam trends on the campuses of America. Therefore, these reporters are skeptical at best, and hostile at worst.

With this in mind, you and the PAO must reach out and educate the new generation of reporters and the public. The best way to do this is to open a dialogue with the news media by learning to communicate better.

### PUBLIC OPINION

We are now in the post-cold war period experiencing a major change in how American society deals with domestic and international relations. There is a new world order with more multipolar power dispersal. Worldwide economic competition and domestic concerns, such as the war on drugs, AIDS, the federal deficit and environmental problems are at the forefront of the American agenda.

As American priorities change, it is important to talk to Americans in a manner that relates to these changes. We must note that, regardless of the American public's mood of the moment, its confidence in their military is strong. This is reflected in the Gallup public opinion poll in figure 4-1.

### News Media Role

One characteristic most Americans have in common is that we begin our day watching, listening or reading the news. What the public thinks depends largely on what the public hears. The American news media are the American citizen's "intelligence network." The headlines of the evening newscast tell us what is important in society.

In the past 10 years, the worldwide Cable News Network (CNN) has become the electronic "plug-in" news source of choice for military command centers, newspaper editorial offices and business travelers around the world.

Institution	1991	1990	1989	1988	1975
Military	85%	68%	63%	58%	58%
Church	62	56	52	59	68
Supreme Court	48	47	46	56	49
Public Schools	40	45	43	49	NA
Newspapers	29	39	NA	36	NA
Banks	41	36	42	49	NA
Organized Labor	24	27	NA	26	38
Big Business	24	25	NA	25	34
Television	33	25	NA	27	NA
Congress	28	24	32	35	40
Categories "A Great Deal" and "Quite a Lot" Lumped Together in Percentages					

Figure 4-1.—Gallup public opinion poll reflecting strong public confidence in the military.

## War of Words

It was clear in the 1990-1991 Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM that political and military leaders must be involved with the news media to communicate their views to the American and international publics. In fact, *Fortune* magazine reported that President Bush included the use of the news media as one of his main "tools of crisis management." Leaders know that to gain public support and trust, they must reach out through the news media. It is also true that our enemies and military critics are "media street smart."

### MEDIA TYPES

Learning Objective: *Identify and analyze the various types of media.*

To be successful in disseminating information through mass media, you must analyze all available media. You must determine the requirements of each medium and then, within the limits of security, accuracy, propriety, policy and resources, fulfill these requirements. By serving each medium's particular

requirements, you prove a principle of communication (know your audience) and a principle of the public affairs profession (give the media what they need in a way they can use it).

Your public affairs office should serve (at least) the following media and be familiar with their requirements:

- Newspaper
- Radio
- Television
- News services
- Syndicates
- Magazines
- News magazines
- Consumer magazines
- Internal or promotional publications
- Books

You must not favor one medium over another; however, you must take advantage of the potential and recognize the limitations of each for circulation, selectivity of publics, influence or prestige, appearance and flexibility in the timing of news releases. One common limitation is that coverage does not guarantee public knowledge or understanding of an issue. You cannot expect radio to do a job that is better suited for a newspaper, or for a newspaper to do the entire job of communicating in an era when the electronic media have access to virtually all American homes.

## **NEWSPAPER**

The newspaper is the oldest medium of mass communication and the backbone of public information. While the number of newspapers published in America has declined with the ascendancy of television, total circulation is increasing.

Characteristics of newspapers include the following:

- Attraction of habitual readers and a tendency to build confidence among them
- Coverage in greater depth than broadcast or pictorial media
- Style of presentation and organization that permits gaining superficial knowledge of readers
- Timely coverage when compared to magazines or books
- Provide information and entertainment that help shape public opinion
- More permanence than messages from electronic media or oral communication

There are differences between the metropolitan daily, the suburban or neighborhood daily and the weekly newspaper. Where a metropolitan daily focuses on international, national and top-level local news and features, a suburban daily (or weekly) may limit itself to local and regional news with only brief summaries of national and international news. Suburban newspapers have grown in popularity recently because of their comprehensive coverage of local news.

## **RADIO**

Radio became a medium of mass communication in the 1930s. Its advantages are immediacy, variety, mobility and aural appeal. Because of the recent

resurrection of the AM news/talk format, the radio listening audience may include nearly every individual in the country.

Radio is conversational, informal, intimate and timely. It has an almost instantaneous reaction time to fast-breaking news but is limited to headlines and high points.

## **TELEVISION**

Television is the newest and most potent of mass communications media. It combines the impact of sight and sound with the immediacy of radio. Communication satellites and roving news teams can relay live telecasts from almost anywhere in the world or even outer space. Television has extended the eyes and ears of Americans to the point where they are participants in the "global village."

Television news programs are network (60 Minutes, 20/20, etc.) or local in origin. Most local stations do live coverage and welcome the opportunity to consider videotapes of significant military news or feature events, including sports.

In many areas, television stations are owned by or closely allied with newspapers. Most use both The Associated Press and United Press International wire services.

Your office may be called upon by radio and television broadcasters to help produce news programs about military topics. When requests come from local television or radio stations, you should provide help as long as you do not violate the basic considerations of security, accuracy, propriety and policy or interfere with the military mission. Providing technical help to broadcasters is routine at military bases.

There is no common standard for preparing news feature material used by all broadcasting stations. You should determine each station's requirements for format and length of news items and features, size of still news photos and preferences for slides, photos or videotape footage.

## **NEWS SERVICES**

News services, often called wire services, exist to provide the mass media with coverage they cannot afford to get by any other means. Mark Twain once said, "There are only two forces that carry light to all concerns of the globe, the sun in the heavens and The Associated Press down here."

Wire service representatives are important media contacts. Consider them in all public information activities and invite them to participate in military news or news-related events within their areas. They are seldom available for extended press trips or maneuvers at a distant location, since their responsibility is normally only for news in their general area.

Members of other news media are often employed by wire services as stringers for a news service, feature service or news magazine and should not be overlooked in any public information program.

Currently, there are two predominant wire services in the United States: The Associated Press and United Press International. You should be aware that there are also several foreign wire services.

### **The Associated Press**

The Associated Press (AP) is a nonprofit service owned by its members. Members take news items from the AP teletype and feed local items into the system. Consequently, a story of broad human interest from your command may be relayed around the world in a few hours. AP serves overseas publications and broadcasting organizations that have the status of "subscriber" rather than "member," but they still share in its costs. AP also offers photo service and technical advice to its members and subscribers.

### **United Press International**

United Press International (UPI) is a profit-making service that sells news and feature material to mass media. It offers virtually the same services as AP, including a wire-photo service, features, news film and audio service. UPI evolved from the former United Press and International News Service.

### **World News Services**

News services from other nations, such as Reuters (England), Agence France Press (France) and Xin Hua (Peoples Republic of China) also supply news to their national media. These services generally report significant U.S. news. In 1967, Reuters entered the American news distribution market after the end of a 50-year business agreement with AP in which British and American news was exchanged. Reuters began to distribute American news to subscribers within the United States and those in the United Kingdom. It also established a U.S. financial news service for American clients.

## **SYNDICATES**

Syndicates are either owned by a large newspaper or chain of papers, or they are the result of cooperative agreements among noncompeting papers. They often provide in-depth stories of what the wire services report as spot news. Examples are as follows: NANA (North American Newspaper Alliance), NEA (Newspaper Enterprises Association), *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times* and the Hearst Headline Service.

## **MAGAZINES**

Magazines may be grouped as news, consumer or internal/promotional publications. Magazines have wide circulation, though they are published less frequently than newspapers.

Few magazine editors want news releases except as possible leads for staff-written stories. An editor provided with feature material and good pictures of interest to his readership may either follow through with a staff-written article or at least adapt the material as a filler.

Requests for help on Navy features made by a national magazine must be approved by CHINFO before information is released or support is given.

## **NEWS MAGAZINES**

News magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek* U.S. *News and World Report*) are national weekly newspapers covering the major news of the week in greater depth than daily newspapers or the electronic media. They have the following characteristics:

- **Interpretation.** A clearer meaning is given to items reported in small amounts during the week.
- **Background.** With time to dig more deeply, more information can be developed to place a story in perspective.
- **Review.** A reader can catch up on news he may have missed in the daily newspaper.
- **Selectivity.** Material printed is selected carefully for national or international significance.
- **Performance.** Printed on good stock, it stays in the home or the office for longer periods.

## CONSUMER MAGAZINES

Consumer magazines appeal to various special interests of the public. Technology, business, sports, hobbies, theater, gossip and humor are among the major subjects reported. These provide an opportunity to tell a story in greater detail or from a particular point of view. Stories need not be as timely as in a news magazine.

## INTERNAL OR PROMOTIONAL PUBLICATIONS

Internal or promotional publications reach the internal and external audiences of companies, agencies, professions or vocations. They are also called trade journals and house organs. *Public Affairs Communicator* is an example of a trade journal.

## BOOKS

Many PAOs and senior journalists are asked to assist authors of books dealing with military subjects. More than 30,000 books are published in this country annually. Because of the continuing importance of the Navy and the armed services as a whole to our society, authors of virtually all classes of books (nonfiction, adult, juvenile, general, text and pictorial) rely on the public affairs office for help in gathering material.

You may assist book authors by making available unclassified research or background materials. Contact CHINFO when an author's request involves more than locally available materials.

## MEDIA ACTIONS

Learning Objective: *Identify the various types of media actions that lead to distorted messages.*

Pure media consumers do not have a difficult time understanding the news media. However, when a media consumer is faced with actually using news media channels, that person must have a more detailed awareness of how the media operates.

The following is a list of the general news media "sins" that lead to distorted messages:

1. **Short deadlines.** Reporters are always under tight deadlines, which means you must be prepared to react, on short notice, if it is in the best interest of the command.

2. **Time or space limitations.** Print, radio and television have very small spaces (such as a paragraph)

and short periods (such as a minute, 30 seconds) to tell your story.

3. **Inexperienced reporters.** Most reporters do not know the difference between a rear admiral and a chief petty officer. Military reporters relate to the word *Tomahawk* as an American Indian weapon, not a U.S. Navy cruise missile. Translate military terminology into civilian terms, if possible. Educating the reporter before an interview helps.

4. **Nonattributed news.** Be careful when using sources without clearly identifying them, such as "a naval officer said. . . ." Establish interview ground rules *before* the interview and how you will respond to unknown sources or critics. Ground rules will be discussed later in this chapter.

5. **Editor negligence.** Information suspected of being wrong or misleading is not always checked out by senior editors. The PAO should always challenge data or facts that he believes to be wrong and go directly to the reporter's boss if necessary.

6. **Competition.** Too often, a sloppy job is done by news reporters because of news media competing to get the news first. However, competition can be positive. For example, editors and news directors know that if reporters are abusive to sources, access will eventually become more difficult and the competition will have an edge.

7. **Prize journalism.** Some reporters are looking for the big story of waste, fraud and abuse to win professional acclaim and praise.

8. **Mob journalism.** In a crisis, many news reporters arrive on-scene and demand access to crisis events and interviews. You must be cool and stay in control if this situation occurs.

9. **Pack (trend) journalism.** Once a single exclusive story hits the wire services, a whole pack of stories on the same subject appears. For instance, if the Navy experiences a series of aircraft accidents over a short period, the media pack will focus its stories on naval aviation safety and training.

10. **Checkbook journalism.** News media "buy" a story or source. For example, a television station may pay air fare, meals and lodging to bring a family (next of kin) to the crisis.

11. **Hitchhiker journalism.** A reporter, who thinks something important has or is about to happen (at a base or ship), stations himself outside the gate and picks up

a sailor. A social conversation soon centers on the reporter's area of military interest.

**12. Mismatched headlines.** A copy editor puts headlines on a story, **not** the reporter who wrote it. With time and space constraints, catchy headlines are vulnerable to error. **Do not blame the reporter for a bad headline.**

## ROLE OF THE PAO/SENIOR JO IN MEDIA RELATIONS

Learning Objective: *Recognize the role of the PAO/senior JO in media relations, and develop an awareness of news media communications strategies.*

In most cases, the CO readily consults the PAO and senior journalist for sound guidance about news media encounters. Remember, the CO is not the public affairs specialist of the command—you and the PAO have earned that title. If you cannot provide the answers for the CO, assure him that you will get them. Do not expect the CO and XO to take up the slack and deal with media concerns directly.

The CO relies on the PAO and senior journalist to perform the following media-related functions:

- Advise if a media interview is a good idea, is authorized and within policy to do.
- Research the interview issues.
- Research background on the reporter and news organization working the request.
- Act as the interviewer in rehearsing the possible questions and answers likely to be asked during the interview.
- Arrange the interview, including the establishment of ground rules and location.
- Monitor the interview and tape-record to make an in-house record, and follow up on any promised items to be provided later.
- Act as liaison with the news organization, and provide video copies or news clippings of the interview to the interviewee.
- Provide after-action feedback to determine if the desired message was delivered.

In the previous chapter segments, we covered the strengths and weaknesses of the news media. Now we will cover ways the Navy uses to **educate** the news

people who have the tendency to be skeptical of the military.

The three communications strategy options are as follows:

- Reactive
- Proactive
- Winging it

Obviously, the Navy will use the reactive strategy in unanticipated events, such as an accident or incident. However, the best option is to be proactive and plan public communications as carefully as military leaders plan an operation.

Avoid the “winging it” communications strategy. Why? Because you run the risk of backing down to critics in the communications “war of words” battle. If this is done, the critics will educate the news media, our families and the public while we remain silent.

The proactive strategy provides the following benefits:

- The ability to see media regularly by allowing access.
- The ability to recognize that each reporter is different by getting to know each one respectively.
- The ability to recognize that each news organization has different needs by knowing that particular organization. (For example, television needs action video while print media need words and photos.)
- The ability to receive unforeseen benefits by providing a candid and honest approach to news people. (For example, if a reporter respects you, he may call you before running a negative story to get your side of it.)

The proactive strategy also offers an opportunity to gain new insights from news persons. Reporters often provide valuable insight into issues and events of vital interest to military people. By casually interviewing the interviewer, you can get an entirely new perspective to an existing issue.

## RELEASE OF NEWS TO THE MEDIA

Learning Objective: *Identify the various methods used to release news to the media and any specific associated characteristics.*

Acting for the CO, the command PAO has the authority to release routine Navy information to the media and public. Releasing news can be a tricky matter for the PAO. He must balance each release between the principle of “maximum disclosure with minimum delay” and the constraints that come with security, accuracy, propriety and policy considerations.

Whether the information is volunteered or demanded by a media query, the PAO, with your assistance, must answer yes to the following questions before it is offered to the public:

- Is the information unclassified?
- Is it accurate?
- Is the information free of privacy act violations?
- Does the command have the authority to release the information?

If you and the PAO cannot give a firm “yes” to each of these questions, seek the advice of the PAO in the next highest command in the chain.

After you have checked the information for classification, accuracy, and so forth, the next step is releasing it to the media. There are several commonly used methods you should consider, including the following: news release, news advisory, oral release, interviews, news conference, media embark, visual release and marketing.

## **NEWS RELEASE**

The news release is the most common method of distributing news to the media. It is an economical, but not the most reliable method. Its role in getting an organization into print for a low cost of production and distribution makes the news release a borderline nuisance to editors. Usually referred to by editors as a “handout,” it clogs the editor’s in-basket and is often resented, though the mass media save millions of dollars in reporting expenses through this distribution method.

A news release must be worthy of an editor’s attention, space and time. Accuracy, professional preparation and timely delivery are essentials. Releases should be identified clearly with the source, subject and what the originator wants the editor to do with it (immediate release, hold for release, and so on).

The name, address and telephone number of the organization’s PAO should appear on the news release in case the editor wants to verify or get additional facts. Most public affairs offices use preprinted release forms.

Editors most often complain that news releases are like meals served by indifferent housewives—merely dishing out the canned goods. Therefore, you must avoid the following common pitfalls of news releases:

- Mentioning the name of the CO in every news release no matter how insignificant his involvement.
- Using cryptic military terminology or acronyms when it is not essential to the story or even understandable to a civilian audience.
- Using subjects that only interest the military—for example, sending an internally oriented story to a city editor.
- Sending exactly the same release to all types of media regardless of their unique requirements.
- Writing news releases in a magazine style or using too much space for what needs to be said. Releases more than one page in length frequently end up in the wastebasket.

Despite its shortcomings, the news release does find its way into print. It can be mailed, hand-carried or telephoned, depending on the circumstances.

The following comments of one city editor emphasize the importance of letting the news release speak for itself once you have sent it to the editor:

“Please, if that is a handout, just give it to me. If we can use it, I will ask a reporter to rewrite it. If we cannot, I will throw it away. Do not hold it under my nose and read it to me with your finger tracing every line. I can read. And do not suggest that we have a little talk about it. I do not have the time for conferences. No use standing there. There are 17 more ‘press agents’ waiting to see me.”

Most editors and news directors prefer a simple fact sheet to an artfully contrived news release.

## **NEWS ADVISORY**

A news advisory is an abbreviated form of a news release that is intended to get the news media to cover an event themselves. The news advisory is usually a page in length and includes the following information:

- A compact description of the event the command wants the news media to cover.
- The date, time and place of the event.

- The significance of the event in capsule form and its relevancy to the editor's reading, listening or viewing audience.
- The details of the event, including any attractive features that would give it more appeal to the editor (for instance, the arrival of a ship at its home port following a seven-month overhaul).
- The unique "opportunities" that will be afforded to the news media, such as interviews and photography.
- The command point of contact who can answer questions.

## ORAL RELEASE

Oral release of information maybe made in person or by telephone. When telephoning information to the media, read the release from a prepared text.

Another oral method of releasing news occurs when you reply to queries from media representatives. In this situation, a "query sheet" should be used. The query sheet should contain the following items of information:

- Date and time
- Name and organization of the caller
- Telephone number of the caller
- Question(s) asked
- Reply given
- Source of information and coordination
- Person handling the query (especially in a large office)

Use the query sheet to reply to all questions, but its use is especially crucial when you make oral releases of sensitive news, such as crimes, accidents or incidents. A sample query sheet is shown in figure 4-2.

## INTERVIEWS

Interviews with the PAO by a reporter on subjects that cannot be covered readily by fact sheets are common. Unless a PAO has full information on a subject or if the PAO is inexperienced, he should use extreme caution in participating in such interviews since normally any comments will be considered official statements.

Interviews with subject matter experts or newsworthy individuals are usually arranged by the PAO at the request of a news person. Briefing interviewees before the interview is highly recommended to cover ground rules, the anticipated interview type or technique and any media training required.

Reporters often feel the need to interview the CO on newsworthy or important events or circumstances. You and the PAO can enhance the outcome of the interview if it is first discussed with the reporter and then with the CO before it takes place.

## Ground Rules

Each time the PAO and a reporter meet, whether it be at a news conference, briefing or interview, the ground rules must be stated clearly, understood and mutually agreed to by both parties before the interview begins. These ground rules include the following: on-the-record, off-the-record, background/not for attribution and deep background.

**ON-THE-RECORD.**— Remarks can be quoted word for word and attributed directly to the person being interviewed. The interviewee is identified by name and title. Here is an example: "Captain Alexander Gordian, USN, Commanding Officer, USS *Blue Blazer*, said the injured crewman was taken to Portsmouth Naval Hospital and could not be identified until next of kin were notified." To avoid embarrassment, the best rule of thumb is to grant interviews using only this ground rule.

**OFF-THE-RECORD.**— Information that is to be held incomplete confidence. It is not to be printed under any circumstances or in any form, nor is the information to be the subject of conversation except among those who were privileged to receive it. Off-the-record information is used to give trusted reporters special information they need to grasp the significance of complicated news events. It is also used to orient correspondents about important future events that will require special handling by a thoroughly informed press. It is an effective means of calming undue media alarm over particular developments.

**A word of caution: Off-the record statements can be dangerous. Avoid them as much as possible**

**BACKGROUND/NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION.**— Information that may be used by correspondents, provided the remarks are not attributed to a specific source, for example, a source identified by name or



## QUERY SHEET

Taken by \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ Of \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Deadline \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

Date and time of response: \_\_\_\_\_

Response: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Query referred to: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Source of information/coordination: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Given to: \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Method of release: Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Orally \_\_\_\_\_ Printed \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 4-2.—Query sheet.

exact title. The source can be identified in general terms, such as a “Pentagon spokesman,” “government official,” “qualified authority,” and so forth.

**DEEP BACKGROUND.**— The source is completely omitted but the reporter can use the information. Example: “It has been learned that Admiral Little resigned because he was forced out by. . . .”

## Types of Interviews and Techniques

There are several types of news media interviews, ranging from impromptu ones in a crisis to long-planned, easy going talk-show type of interviews. The senior journalist must know the types of interviews and the techniques involved for two reasons. First, there may come a time when you will be the subject of a media interview if the PAO is unavailable (or if you are serving as a PAO in a smaller command). Second, you are frequently called upon to conduct media training for those individuals scheduled for a media interview.

**ACCIDENT OR INCIDENT.**— In the highly-charged emotional atmosphere of an accident or incident where news media may be denied access due to ongoing investigations, recommend to the CO that he make a brief statement to the news media and take a few questions. With the help of the news media, the CO may do the following:

- Reach out to crew families and assure them that the CO is in charge, all that can be done is being done, and so forth.
- Tell the public of heroic acts.
- Express thanks to those individuals or organizations involved in rescue, firefighting, and so on.

Any questions about accident details may be answered with the following statement: “I’m sorry, I cannot discuss details that will be part of the ongoing Navy investigation.” In a tragic accident or incident, senior fleet PAOs will be involved and will provide your office with advice and guidance.

**GENERAL.**— This is a one-on-one interview involving a reporter and an individual involved in a specific event or issue. You and the PAO may grant this type of interview on a case-by-case basis, depending on the sensitivity of the issue and if the subject matter is not beyond the responsibility of the person to be interviewed. The PAO should monitor the interview and tape-record it in case questions arise later on the context of the answers or if the interviewee is misquoted.

**TALK SHOW.**— Many local television and cable stations have interview shows where “people in the news” are interviewed. These are referred to as “soft” interviews that usually focus on the personality of the person or command, rather than on hard news issues. Nevertheless, prior preparation is important even for a soft interview. Be sure you know if there will be another speaker on the show who will be asked their opinions of the issues the interviewee will address.

Since the talk show interview is usually scheduled in advance and topics may be agreed upon in advance, the interviewee must be aware that new questions may arise tied to current events in the news. For example, if the CO is scheduled for a 0900 interview on the heels of a major naval incident nine hours earlier, he can expect some questions on it.

**AMBUSH.**— This type of “on-the-run,” unanticipated interview usually is related to some major issue or controversial event. The person leaves his home, a congressional hearing or a courtroom, and is suddenly faced with television cameras, microphones and shouted questions. The main rule here is to keep cool, smile and move as soon as possible. It is acceptable to say “I am sorry, I do not have the time to talk to you.” Once the subject stops to answer one question, it is harder to move on.

**REMOTE.**— This is similar to the general interview but involves the interviewee in one location (such as on the ship’s bridge or pier) and the interviewer in a television studio asking questions. There may also be a third party linked by another remote location or in the television studio. The interviewee has an earplug to hear the questions.

The main drawback to this interview is the distraction and confusion the audio feedback makes in the earplug. This technical problem makes the interviewee more nervous and thus interferes with the ability to do the best interview possible. Practice with the remote will help, but such interviews are always difficult.

**EDITED.**— As you already know, any interview, whether it be print, radio or television, may be edited if it is not done live. The problem with the edited interview is that an answer may be edited **out of context**. One answer to this problem is to have command personnel only appear on live radio or television shows. However, even alive interview can be stage-managed by the host.

The best advice about this interview is that you know the people you are dealing with. For example, the Navy has had very bad experiences with some so-called

“investigative” reporters and programs and will decline to accept interview invitations from those sources. On the other hand, there are some media (mainly trade publications) which will present a copy of the draft interview article for correction by the interviewee. Unfortunately, this practice is rare.

### Television Interview Tips

As covered before, the senior journalist is called upon to provide media training to individuals scheduled to represent the command in a television interview. Media training simply means conveying certain interview tips to the interviewee to make sure the interview is a success. This section covers the following television interview tips: appearance, eye wear, eye contact and the use of the interviewer’s first name.

**APPEARANCE.**– If the interview is in a television studio, have the interviewee wear either the service dress blue or summer white uniform. These are the most recognizable Navy uniforms and look best on television. If the interviewee is wearing summer whites, make sure he takes a fresh shirt to the studio and changes just before the interview to avoid a wrinkled look. Have the interviewee remove his name tag because they glare or shine under television lighting.

After the lavalier microphone is placed on the tie or shirt, make sure the tie or shirt is straight. The microphone should be inside the coat or blouse so it does not show. The interviewee should not wear a large blouse or too many rings, which also shine under the lights and distract the television audience. The uniform of the day is acceptable if the interview is held aboard a naval unit or facility.

Be sure the interviewee uses makeup to help control perspiration and glare. A small amount of makeup is normally applied by television station personnel.

Of course, make sure the interviewee has a fresh haircut and is clean shaven (if male).

**EYEWEAR.**– If the interviewee normally wears glasses but chooses not to wear them during the interview, make sure he takes them off about 20 minutes before the interview. This allows the eyes to adjust to the set and lights. Makeup may be needed on the nose where glasses sit.

**EYE CONTACT.**– Most of the time the interviewee looks directly into the camera when answering a question. Tell him to look at the **interviewer**, not the camera, during the interview. The obvious exception is the remote interview.

**USE OF FIRST NAME.**– If the interviewee knows the interviewer and feels natural using his first name, it is perfectly acceptable. If the interviewee feels a need to be more formal, then he should use the host’s last name.

### General Interview Tips

Include the following interview tips in your media training regimen to get the most out of every interview:

- Relax and be yourself.
- Tell the truth, even if it is painful.
- Never say “no comment.” If you cannot discuss something because of an ongoing investigation or because it is classified, explain as much as you can. If additional information is requested, make an effort to get back to the reporter.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Offer to get back later with the answer, if possible.
- As in news releases, avoid military or technical jargon. **Always remember the target audience—the American public.**
- Answer questions directly and give the bottom line up front. Amplification, if needed, may be given later.
- Correct the record. If a reporter makes an error or has wrong information, politely correct him during the interview.
- Listen carefully to the reporter. Ask for repetition or clarification if necessary.
- Maintain eye contact. Make sure the reporter knows you are interested and paying attention.
- Be expressive and try to be interesting.
- Be humorous, if appropriate. Humor is one of the best forms of communication.
- Maintain a positive attitude.
- Be prepared to answer the five W’s: Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.
- Always assume that you are on the air, even if you are told that you are off. Technical crews make mistakes.
- Be modest and confident. You are the expert, but do not be condescending.

- Use the studio monitor to check your appearance before air time, then maintain eye contact with the reporter and ignore the monitor.
- Never lose your temper, even if provoked.
- Do not drum your fingers, twiddle your thumbs, tap your feet or act nervously.
- Do not look around the room for the answer. It gives the impression of discomfort, bluffing or desperation.
- Never speculate or comment on matters beyond your cognizance or responsibility.

## NEWS CONFERENCE

The news conference was briefly covered in Chapter 3. It is held only when a command has something specific to announce to the media that cannot be handled in a news release or by a telephone call. Another criterion for scheduling a news conference is if it is requested by the news media. Under normal conditions, the news conference should last no more than 30 minutes.

### Command Participants

The CO is normally the focal point in most news conferences. However, if highly technical information in several different fields are involved, the appropriate subject matter expert should be on hand to answer questions the CO directs to them. Regardless of the news conference participants, the senior journalist and PAO must thoroughly brief these individuals on the procedures and limitations of the news conference.

The news conference should not be attended by senior command personnel who do not have an active role in the issue or the news conference. Their presence can cause considerable embarrassment to everyone involved. Reporters will direct most of their questions to the subject matter experts by way of the CO.

### Preparing Participants

A news conference can mark the first time an individual in the command meets many reporters. A good way to acclimate participants beforehand is by conducting a mock news conference (commonly called a “murder board”) with public affairs staff personnel acting as news people. Your developing tougher than normal questions will help you get the most out of the session.

## Inviting News Media

Invitations to the media must be made well in advance and timed with media deadlines in mind. When possible, hold the conference on a day or at an hour when coverage chances are most favorable. Initially, invitations should go out by telephone, then followed up in writing when possible. Let the reporters know what will be covered during the news conference, but do not disclose specific details. The day before the news conference, appoint a staff member to call and remind all the invited reporters. Make the written invitations friendly and informal.

Appoint a point of contact in the public affairs office to receive the media RSVP calls. This person must be fully briefed on what information to get from the respondents and what information must be given to the caller. A media RSVP sheet (fig. 4-3) can speed up the conversation.

## Site Requirements

The first consideration in choosing a press conference site is accessibility. No matter where you intend to hold a news conference, the media must be able to get to the site. Operational security is another major consideration when choosing a site.

The site should be attractive, large enough to seat the media comfortably and have the following features:

- **Electrical power for running equipment.** Television lighting sets have a 600-to 1,000 watt bulb in each light. There are at least two and probably three needed, depending on the site you choose.
- **Facilities for filing stories.** Have on hand an adequate number of telephones, typewriters, writing papers and pencils.
- **Enough parking.** Electronic equipment is heavy. The closer to the news conference area, the better. If this is not possible, arrange for some mode of transportation to move reporters to the area or to allow them to unload their equipment at the door and then park.
- **Adequate visual background.** The visual background behind the podium should be suitable for video and still photography. Avoid reflective surfaces, geometric patterns or distracting backgrounds. Use background colors that contrast favorably with Navy uniforms.

## Media RSVP Sheet

### A. INFORMATION NEEDED FROM THE CALLER:

Name of reporter: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization he represents: \_\_\_\_\_

Other members of the crew: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Time and date of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of arrival: \_\_\_\_\_

Any special requirements/arrangements needed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### B: INFORMATION TO PROVIDE TO THE CALLER:

Date/Time of the news conference: \_\_\_\_\_

Location and directions to the news conference: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

POC: \_\_\_\_\_

Parking arrangements: \_\_\_\_\_

Special instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 4-3.—Media RSVP sheet.

- **Public address system.** A good PA system may be needed if the room is large.

## Conducting the News Conference

After the site has been selected, concentrate on conducting the news conference.

Put together a press information kit for the news conference. Each media representative should receive a kit (for television teams, one press information kit per crew is enough) either as they enter the room or when the news conference is completed. The kit consists of biographies, photographs, unclassified fact sheets, advance copies of speeches and any other pertinent information. The purpose of the press information kit is to provide accurate background information about the event in a convenient form. Be cautious not to flood reporters with a lot of unnecessary material.

The next step is selecting a moderator. Usually, the PAO assumes this role. The moderator is that all-important individual who must conduct the news conference. He is responsible for performing the following tasks:

- Making the introductory remarks, including a statement of the purpose of the news conference, a brief outline and duration of each segment, introduction of any distinguished visitors in attendance, statement of procedures to be followed during the question and answer segment and ground rules in effect (ground rules should be **on the record** and **for attribution by name and title**).
- Moderating the overall media briefing.
- Introducing the CO once the media has been seated.
- Conducting the question and answer period.
- Closing the news conference by saying, for example, "We have time for one more question."
- Thanking the media for their attendance and making additional administrative announcements.

After the moderator makes the introductory remarks, a principal statement is made. This is normally done by the CO and may include a further introduction of distinguished visitors or the introduction of subject matter experts as necessary.

Tape-record the news conference and transcribe the tape. This gives you a hard copy from which to answer resulting questions as they arise. In addition, you should prepare a news release on the conference and distribute it to news media who could not attend, but were interested in the subject. If possible, telephone the release to the media.

## MEDIA EMBARK

Whether it be routine operations or large-scale exercises, the media embark is an excellent way to release news to the media. The media embark is designed to let the actions and words of the men and women in the fleet tell the Navy's story. You and the PAO should make sure the embark is approved by the proper authority and that the reporters are adequately briefed before embarking. In addition, you and the PAO should prepare the command for the embark and identify and train escorts.

## Approval Authority

The approval authority for media embarks depends largely on the impact of the news medium and the nature of the embarkation. All embarks involving national media must be approved by CHINFO, who coordinates with ASD(PA) as needed. Submarine media embarks are approved by the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Undersea Warfare) after a recommendation from CHINFO. Other media embarks may be approved by the proper fleet commanders in chief, provided the following information is included with the media embark request:

- The names of the reporters
- The reporters' positions, affiliations and any other appropriate identifying information
- The ship or unit to be embarked, dates, points of embarkation and debarkation and any intermediate stops
- The reasons for the requested embarkation and description of how embarkation is an essential part of the proposed story
- A statement that the embark will be on a space available, not-to-interfere basis at no cost to the government
- The name, command and telephone number of the project officer who will be directly

responsible for coordinating all aspects of the embarkation

A well-orchestrated embark involving national media begins at the local command level, then ultimately reaches CHINFO for final approval. Planning and coordination is the responsibility of the on-scene PAO, because he is more familiar with the subject matter, issues and facilities where the embark will take place.

### Pre-Departure Briefing

Hold a pre-departure briefing as soon as possible so reporters can meet the CO and other key individuals, and get answers to preliminary questions. If correspondents join your unit while it is deployed, make sure they are briefed soon after arriving.

Cover the following subjects in the pre-departure briefing:

- Ground rules
- Basic shipboard safety
- Emergency procedures
- Off-limit areas
- Photography restrictions
- Procedures to take during a security alert
- Wardroom and berthing accommodations

**Note:** Embarked news media representatives will receive the same wardroom and berthing privileges as a lieutenant commander or senior, if available, **regardless** of any prior military rank held.

### Preparing the Command

Inform the crew about the media embark through the Plan of the Day, ship's newspaper, bulletin boards and SITE system. Give the reporter's names, affiliations and the length of their visits. Be ready to provide the reporters with crew members of certain geographical locations for interviews. For instance, if an ENG team from a San Antonio television station embarks aboard the USS *Forrestal* (AVT 59) in Pensacola to do a story on naval aviation training, they will request interviews with Texans involved in the actual training, especially those from San Antonio. The personnel office can help you with hometown information.

### Escorts

If the number of embarking correspondents outnumbers your public affairs office escorts, you have to get more. These escorts are usually senior enlisted members or officers identified by the command during pre-embark planning sessions. Regardless of who is chosen, you must adequately train these escorts and make sure they attend the pre-departure briefing.

### VISUAL RELEASE

A picture is worth a thousand words, and one good still photo can often do a better job of conveying an idea than a month's worth of news releases. You should develop an eye for photo-worthy situations and either release them yourself or invite news photographers to cover the event.

Film clips or videotapes are also in demand if they are not obvious setups or posed situations. In general, news editors and news directors are very distrustful of government audiovisual products. However, if you have established credibility and deal only in "honest images," you can achieve greater acceptance of visual releases.

### MARKETING

Your JO2 has written a feature story about two pilots assigned to a squadron at your air station. She interviewed the pilot and co-pilot after a flight to an interesting destination. The story, written primarily for your base newspaper, is aimed at your internal audience that already knows something about your base and its mission. A picture of the two of them in the cockpit illustrates the story.

What can you do to get more media mileage from this story? **Market it.** Your taking the time to adapt this story to a different audience will enable you to tap into thousands of new readers.

In the preceding scenario, you can easily modify the story into a hometown feature. By having the two pilots fill out a Fleet Home Town News release form, you get both personal data and release permission. With minimal rewrite time, you can take the original story and turn it into two separate stories-with each pilot getting star billing for his hometown markets. When doing this, you will need to add such information as hometowns, where they attended school and the names of their parents. You also must identify the location of the air station and its mission.

## Navy Office of Information

Before marketing your stories to any non-Navy produced publication (such as *Navy Times*), you must coordinate your efforts with the nearest Navy Office of Information (NAVINFO). There are six NAVINFOS, listed as follows:

- Southeast (Atlanta)
- New England (Boston)
- Midwest (Chicago)
- Southwest (Dallas)
- West (Los Angeles)
- East (New York City)

NAVINFOS are field activities of CHINFO that provide a communications link between senior Navy leadership and media in their respective regions. Some of the media-related functions NAVINFOS perform include the following:

- Verifying news stories
- Answering queries
- Providing information on news and feature opportunities
- Arranging interviews
- Providing assistance in contacting Navy experts
- Providing photos, videotapes and graphics
- Supplying print and broadcast features
- Providing audio feeds and actualities
- Arranging visits to ships and stations
- Furnishing background material and research assistance
- Providing editorial background
- Supplying regular print feature packages of general interest

Hometown features may be marketed by sending six copies and six photos (with cutlines) to the nearest NAVINFO. Cutlines should include enough information so the photo can stand alone without the story. Be sure to credit your photographer and include a map that shows where your base is located.

## Navy Public Affairs Centers

The Secretary of the Navy established two Navy Public Affairs Centers (PACENs) in 1975. The PACENs in Norfolk and San Diego serve as CHINFO field activities and produce feature materials (written, audio and visual) for civilian newspapers, magazines and radio markets. Special emphasis is placed on marketing expanded photo features to hometown newspapers. PACENs once marketed stories through the NAVINFOS, but in recent years PACEN direct marketing has streamlined the process and led to greater publication rates.

With direction from CHINFO and close coordination with fleet units, PACENs can target personnel participating in important operations or events, giving local editors a hometown tie to major stories.

### Magazine Marketing

Your finding magazines to run your story, such as *All Hands*, *Navy Editor Service*, *Naval Aviation News* and *Surface Warfare*, may require some market research. *All Hands*, for example, wants unusual features that appeal to a broad range of Navy men and women. It will not run the following stories: change of command, poems, milestones, reenlistments, fiction and homeowners. Newsstand magazines, like *Sea Classics*, *Air Combat* and *Military Airpower*, want interesting stories about the Navy and our people. A story about helicopter pilots could run in *Rotary Wing International* or *Defense Helicopter World*. There is also a magazine about women in the military, called *Minerva*. It is up to you to get on the telephone and find out what the magazine editors are looking for.

Remember, if the publication is not Navy-produced, you must contact the nearest NAVINFO before marketing it.

### Log Book

Keep a log book to track the stories you have marketed. This way, you know where you sent the story and which pictures you enclosed. If a story does not get published, you can identify other markets to try.

### Success Rate

You will not always be successful in your marketing efforts, so be ready to accept rejection. Often, you will not hear from a publication, even if they decide to print



your story. Other editors acknowledge receipt of the story, tell you when it will run and send you courtesy copies after publication.

Some editors will not accept unsolicited manuscripts and prefer to get a query letter first. Facsimile machines can deliver queries quickly and cut waiting time. Other publications may want an exclusive (such as *All Hands*). When in doubt, send the story.

## **MILITARY/MEDIA RELATIONS DURING HOSTILITIES**

Learning Objective: *Identify the relationship between the military and the media during hostilities.*

When the military shifts gears from peacetime operations to that of a conflict or war, the rules regarding the media also change. In peacetime, there is greater media access to the military and a more open and candid dialogue. However, as tensions increase and the military moves toward crisis and finally hostile action (conflict or war), the news interest or value of covering the military increases dramatically.

Also, the military becomes more “closed-mouthed” because of operational security considerations. This normally leads to a certain amount of friction in the military/media relationship during crisis and conflict.

The basic principle governing the release of information in hostilities is this: released information must be consistent with operational security and not compromise the safety of United States or friendly nation (allied) personnel. Security at the source must apply.

Figures 4-4 and 4-5 show the general ground rules and guidelines used during Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM in 1991.

### **MEDIA POOL**

You were briefly introduced to media pools in Chapters 2 and 3. During hostilities, a news media pool is usually sized to the number of seats and baggage capacity of ground or air transportation and host unit billeting. Using the amphibious exercise *Imminent Thunder* as an example, Navy and Marine Corps units were able to accommodate four media pools. Each pool had six people and was deployed as follows:

#### ***Imminent Thunder* Media Pool:**

1. Television reporter
2. Television photographer

3. Television sound man
4. Radio reporter
5. Print reporter
6. Still photographer

**Pool 1-** Embarked aboard USS *Guam* and flown ashore by helicopter

**Pool 2-** Embarked aboard USS *Gunston Hall* and transported ashore by LCAC (landing craft, air cushion)

**Pool 3-** Covers the assault from ashore and remained overnight with maneuver units

**Pool 4-** Same as pool 3

An important point to remember about media pools is that they are not tour groups that must be tightly banded together. Television reporters need video and print reporters need interviews. It is up to you to make sure individual media needs are met.

## **FAMILIES**

During crisis and hostilities, news media seek Navy families to discuss their personal reactions to the deployment of their service member. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this manual, family rights in dealing with the news media should be clearly understood and passed along to military families as soon as possible.

## **CREDIBILITY**

Learning Objective: *Detail the concept of credibility when dealing with the media.*

In Chapter 1, you were introduced to the concept of credibility in your day-to-day job activities. This encompasses the credibility you must obtain when working with the news media.

While the media can, at times, be difficult to deal with, they can also be the fun part of Navy public affairs. Fun, that is, if your credibility rating is where it should be.

How is credibility with the media established? By being knowledgeable about Navy public affairs, the command to which you are attached and the willingness to go that extra mile for a reporter.

The following are some tips that will help you establish and maintain media credibility:

- Do not be obscure. Reporters can spot a con artist at 50 paces, so do not assume a snow job will be

## **OPERATION DESERT SHIELD/STORM GROUND RULES**

The following information should not be reported because its publication or broadcast could jeopardize operations and endanger lives:

1. For U.S. or coalition units, specific numerical information on troop strength, aircraft, weapons systems, on-hand equipment or supplies (e.g., artillery, tanks, radars, missiles, trucks, water), including amounts of ammunition or fuel moved by or on hand in support and combat units. Unit size may be described in general terms, such as "company-size," "multibattalion," "multidivision," "naval task force" and "carrier battle group." Number or amount of equipment and supplies may be described in general terms, such as "large," "small" or "many."

2. Any information that reveals details of future plans, operations or strikes, including postponed or cancelled operations.

3. Information, photography and imagery that would reveal the specific location of military forces or show the level of security at military installations or encampments. Locations maybe described as follows: all Navy embark stories can identify the ship upon which embarked as a dateline and will state that the report is coming from the "Persian Gulf," "Red Sea" or "North Arabian Sea." Stories written in Saudi Arabia maybe datelined "Eastern Saudi Arabia," "Near the Kuwaiti border," etc. For specific countries outside Saudi Arabia, stories will state that the report is coming from the Persian Gulf region unless that country has acknowledged its participation.

4. Rules of engagement details.

5. Infomation on intelligence collection activities, including targets, methods and results.

6. During an operation, specific information on friendly force troop movements, tactical deployments and dispositions that would jeopardize operational security or lives. This would include designations, names of operations and size of friendly forces involved, until released by CENTCOM.

7. Identification of mission aircraft points of origin, other than as land- or carrier-based.

8. Information on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of enemy camouflage, cover, deception, targeting, direct and indirect fire, intelligence collection or security measures.

9. Specific identifying information on missing or downed aircraft or ships while search and rescue operations are planned or under way.

10. Special operations forces' methods, unique equipment or tactics.

11. Specific operating methods and tactics, (e.g., air angles of attack or speeds, or naval tactics and evasive maneuvers). General terms, such as "low" or "fast," may be used.

12. Information on operational or support vulnerabilities that could be used against U.S. forces, such as details of major battle damage or major personnel losses of specific U.S. or coalition units, until that information no longer provides tactical advantage to the enemy and is, therefore, released by CENTCOM. Damage and casualties may be described as "light," "moderate" or "heavy."

**Figure 4-4.—Media ground rules during Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM.**

## GUIDELINES FOR NEWS MEDIA

News media personnel must carry and support any personal and professional gear they take with them, including protective cases for professional equipment, batteries, cables, converters, etc.

**Night Operations**—Light discipline restrictions will be followed. The only approved light source is a flashlight with a red lens. No visible light source, including flash or television lights, will be used when operating with forces at night unless specifically approved by the on-scene commander.

Because of host-nation requirements, you must stay with your public affairs escort while on Saudi bases. At other U.S. tactical or field locations and encampments, a public affairs escort maybe required because of security, safety and mission requirements as determined by the host commander.

Casualty information, because of concern of the notification of the next of kin, is extremely sensitive. By executive directive, next of kin of all military fatalities must be notified in person by a uniformed member of the appropriate service. There have been instances in which the next of kin have first learned of the death or wounding of a loved one through the news media. The problem is particularly difficult for visual media. Casualty photographs showing a recognizable face, name tag or other identifying feature or item should not be used before the next of kin have been notified. The anguish that sudden recognition at home can cause far outweighs the news value of the photograph, film or videotape. News coverage of casualties in medical centers will be in strict compliance with the instructions of doctors and medical officers.

To the extent that individuals in the news media seek access to the U.S. area of operation, the following rule applies: Prior to or upon commencement of hostilities, media pools will be established to provide initial combat coverage of U.S. forces. U.S. news media personnel present in Saudi Arabia will be given the opportunity to join CENTCOM media pools, providing they agree to pool their products. News media personnel who are not members of the official CENTCOM media pools will not be permitted into forward areas. Reporters are strongly discouraged from attempting to link up on their own with combat units. U.S. commanders will maintain extremely tight security throughout the operational area and will exclude from the area of operation all unauthorized individuals.

For news media personnel participating in designated CENTVOM media pools:

1. Upon registering with the JIB, news media should contact their respective pool coordinator for an explanation of pool operations.

2. In the event of hostilities, pool products will be subject to review before release to determine if they contain sensitive information about military plans, capabilities, operation or vulnerabilities (see attached ground rules) that would jeopardize the outcome of an operation or the safety of U.S. or coalition forces. Material will be examined solely for its conformance to the attached ground rules, not for its potential to express criticism or cause embarrassment. The public affairs escort officer on scene will review pool reports, discuss ground rule problems with the reporter, and in the limited circumstances when no agreement can be reached with a reporter about disputed materials, immediately send the disputed materials to JIB Dhahran for review by the JIB Director and the appropriate news media representative. If no agreement can be reached, the issue will be immediately forwarded to OASD(PA) for review with the appropriate bureau chief. The ultimate decision on publication will be made by the originating reporter's news organization.

3. Correspondents may not carry a personnel weapon.

**Figure 4-5.—Guidelines for news media during Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM.**

effective. If you cannot provide the reporter with an answer, say so and offer to find it. If you cannot discuss a matter because of sensitivities within your organization, do not discuss it.

- If you must refer a reporter to another office or command, provide the telephone number and any additional data that might be helpful. There are few things more frustrating than wading through the DoD bureaucracy.
- Provide background briefings and printed data. Many Navy projects and programs are complicated and explaining them to a novice in simple terms is almost impossible. Background briefings conducted by subject matter experts (with public affairs personnel monitoring the briefings) will be appreciated by a struggling reporter.
- Say “thank you” if a reporter treats you and the subject fairly. Public affairs people frequently forget this common courtesy.
- Treat reporters as you would like to be treated. They are under pressure to get a job done quickly and accurately—a situation the senior JO can easily understand.

### **MEDIA RELATIONS DO’S AND DON’TS**

Learning Objective: *Identify the do’s and don’ts of media relations.*

How should you, the senior journalist, deal with members of the media? As in any area of human relations, there is no simple formula. News people, like public affairs personnel, vary in height, weight, intelligence, tact, level of knowledge and motivation. Common traits might include these: they have a job to do, they want to do it and they know how to do it.

Remembering a few simple do’s and don’ts will help guide you down the path of successful media relations and set an example for your junior public affairs staff members.

### **Do’s**

- Be available at all hours.
- Tell the truth.
- Tell reporters **up front** if you cannot comment on a particular subject or if the answer is classified
- Get the facts, get them right and get them out.
- Be aware of the medium’s time or space limitations, deadlines or other special requirements.
- Know the audience of each medium.
- Know the people who work in the media.

### **DON’TS**

- Lie.
- Speculate.
- Beg for coverage.
- Ask a reporter to kill a story.
- Be partial in dealing with media representatives for any reason.
- Release information to other newsmen which has been given to you by a newsmen.
- Be a publicity hound.
- Ask news people to slant their copy, withhold information or do favors.